

BEFORE THE
POSTAL REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20268-0001

RETAIL ACCESS OPTIMIZATION INITIATIVE,
2011

Docket No. N2011-1

**UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE NOTICE OF FILING LIBRARY REFERENCE
USPS-LR-N2011-1/NP12 AND APPLICATION FOR NON-PUBLIC TREATMENT**
(September 19, 2011)

The Postal Service files the materials indicated below in this proceeding as a
Category 4 Library Reference responsive to Presiding Officer's Information Request No.
2, Question 12:

USPS-LR-N2011-1/NP12 Materials Responsive to Presiding Officer's
Information Request No. 2, Question 12 [Non-Public]

As indicated, this material relates to an information request submitted by the
Presiding Officer on August 24, 2011. The substance of this response was a matter of
ongoing discussion between counsel for the Postal Service and counsel for the
Commission.

Respectfully submitted,

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

By its attorneys:

Anthony F. Alverno
Chief Counsel, Global Business

Kenneth N. Hollies
James M. Mecone
Michael T. Tidwell

475 L'Enfant Plaza West, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20260-1137
(202) 268-3083; Fax -5402
September 19, 2011

**APPLICATION OF THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE
FOR NON-PUBLIC TREATMENT OF MATERIALS**
(September 19, 2011)

In accordance with 39 C.F.R. § 3007.21 and Order No. 225,¹ the United States Postal Service (Postal Service) applies for non-public treatment of certain materials filed under seal with the Commission. Library Reference USPS-LR-N2011-1/NP12 includes sensitive commercial information, consisting of postal facility finance numbers and facility-specific data for thousands of postal installations throughout the United States.

(1) The rationale for claiming that the materials are non-public, including the specific statutory basis for the claim, and a statement justifying application of the provision(s);

The materials designated as non-public consist of information of a commercial nature that under good business practice would not be publicly disclosed. In the Postal Service's view, this information would be exempt from mandatory disclosure pursuant to 39 U.S.C. § 410(c)(2) and 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(3). Because the portions of the materials that the Postal Service applies to file under seal fall within the scope of information not required to be publicly disclosed, the Postal Service asks the Commission to support its determination that these materials qualify as exempt from public disclosure and grant its application for their non-public treatment.

¹ PRC Order No. 225, Final Rules Establishing Appropriate Confidentiality Procedures, PRC Docket No. RM2008-1 (June 19, 2009).

(2) Identification, including name, phone number, and email address for any third-party who is known to have a proprietary interest in the materials, or if such an identification is sensitive, contact information for a Postal Service employee who shall provide notice to that third party;

James Boldt
Manager, Rural Delivery
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20260-7340
(202) 268-6799
james.j.boldt@usps.gov

(3) A description of the materials claimed to be non-public in a manner that, without revealing the materials at issue, would allow a person to thoroughly evaluate the basis for the claim that they are non-public;

The non-public material contains detailed financial and operational information of the Postal Service, such as facility finance numbers and facility-specific data for thousands of facilities throughout the country. The Postal Service maintains that the non-public portions of these materials should remain confidential.

(4) Particular identification of the nature and extent of commercial harm alleged and the likelihood of such harm;

If the information that the Postal Service seeks to protect from disclosure due to its confidential nature were disclosed publicly, the Postal Service considers it quite likely that it would suffer harm. A finance number is an assigned six-digit or 10-digit number that identifies a postal installation for processing its financial data. In a way, it is akin to a social security number, in that if one knows the finance number for a facility, one could determine a wealth of financial data associated with that facility. Such information is information of a commercial nature, which under good business practice would not be publicly

disclosed. It is also information that if, released, could compromise security, which is why the Postal Service controls the internal release of finance numbers. In the Postal Service's opinion, this information would be exempt from mandatory disclosure pursuant to 39 U.S.C. § 410(c)(2) and 5 U.S.C. §§ 552(b)(2,-3).²

Finance numbers are also related solely to the internal rules and practices of the Postal Service, and are internal matters of a relatively limited value outside the Postal Service. On its own, the finance number of a facility does not reveal anything of significance to the public, but it constitutes a key that permits coordination of various internal accounting systems. In the Postal Service's opinion, this information would be exempt from mandatory disclosure pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(2)(a).

Revealing Postal Service facility-specific data would enable competing companies to use the information to assess market potential for establishment of competing mail and parcel stores. The Postal Service considers it highly probable that, if this information were made public, local competitors would take advantage of it.

² In certain circumstances, the Commission may determine the appropriate level of confidentiality to be afforded to such information after weighing the nature and extent of the likely commercial injury to the Postal Service against the public interest in maintaining the financial transparency of a government establishment competing in commercial markets. 39 U.S.C. § 504(g)(3)(A). The Commission has indicated that "likely commercial injury" should be construed broadly to encompass other types of injury, such as harms to privacy, deliberative process, or law enforcement interests. PRC Order No. 194, Second Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to Establish a Procedure for According Appropriate Confidentiality, Docket No. RM2008-1, Mar. 20, 2009, at 11.

(5) At least one specific hypothetical, illustrative example of each alleged harm;

Harm: If someone were to come across such a document where facilities are identified purely by finance number, in and of itself that may not cause much harm. However, if that someone was a competitor who was also provided a key that identified the facility name and address associated with each finance number, that person could potentially have access to a wealth of financial data associated with respective facilities. Such information could, for example, be used to ascertain the best locations to establish competing businesses, perhaps plan theft of materials being transported by the Postal Service, or target the business of Postal Service customers.

Harm: Revealing facility-specific cost and revenue information for selected locations would enable competitors to target the location for sales and marketing purposes.

Hypothetical: Facility-specific cost and revenue information concerning a particular location is revealed to the public. A nearby private commercial mail receiving agency reviews the information, and determines that a discontinuance will affect enough potential customers at the postal location to justify an advertising campaign targeted at existing Postal Service customers. The private company directs advertising for its mailbox and shipping services to existing Postal Service customers, causing the Postal Service to lose business to the competitor.

(6) The extent of protection from public disclosure deemed to be necessary;

The Postal Service maintains that facility finance numbers and facility-specific cost and revenue information for selected locations should be withheld from any person who has not agreed to the Commission's standard confidentiality requirements, including any person involved in competitive decision-making for any entity that might gain competitive advantage from use of this information.

(7) The length of time deemed necessary for the non-public materials to be protected from public disclosure with justification thereof; and

The Commission's regulations provide that non-public materials shall lose non-public status ten years after the date of filing with the Commission, unless the Commission or its authorized representative enters an order extending the duration of that status. 39 C.F.R. § 3007.30.

(8) Any other factors or reasons relevant to support the application.

The Postal Service considers this Application sufficient to fulfill the Postal Service's obligations to justify its determination that the facility finance numbers and facility-specific cost and revenue information should be treated as non-public, and redacted in the public version of this filing.

Conclusion

For the reasons discussed, the Postal Service requests that the Commission grant this application for non-public treatment of the identified materials.